

Anacostia Gateway Update

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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Located at the end of the 11th Street bridge over the Anacostia River is the “gateway” to Anacostia. This gateway leads to the heart of this historic neighborhood in Southeast Washington—home to such landmarks as the Frederick Douglass house—where the District of Columbia Government is leading an effort to spur economic development by relocating the headquarters of one of its major city agencies, the D.C. Department of Transportation (DDOT).

Anacostia Gateway Center Project Moves Forward as D.C. Zoning Commission Gives PUD Approval

The Anacostia Gateway Center Project continues to gain momentum as the D.C. Zoning Commission unanimously approved it for Planned Unit Development (PUD) just days before the Anacostia Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) broke ground at the Southeast District of Columbia site on June 28.

“The groundbreaking for the construction of the Anacostia Gateway

Albert “Butch” Hopkins, president and CEO of the AEDC. “This event marks the commencement of the first phase of a two-phase development. The second phase will be the construction of the D.C. Government Center, a 350,000 square foot facility that will house the city’s Department of Transportation. The first phase of development will be completed in the fall of 2006, and the government center will commence construction at that



Photo Rendering

Development, a three-story, 63,000 square foot office building with first floor retail space, known as 1800 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, S.E., is an event that has been long awaited by the Anacostia community, the city government, and the AEDC and its partners, DRI Partners, Inc. and the National Capital Revitalization Corporation,” said

time and will be completed in the fall of 2008. These two construction projects will be the catalyst for the redevelopment of the downtown commercial district of Anacostia, bringing needed retail goods and services, and jobs to the area.”

There has been significant movement forward in recent months as the Advisory
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Laying the Foundation for Success

As phase one of the Anacostia Gateway Government Center Project moves forward with the Anacostia Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) groundbreaking, stakeholders continue to pay close attention to the concerns of community members as expressed during an earlier meeting. The meeting on the Anacostia Gateway Project provided an opportunity for community members to have their concerns addressed on a variety of issues, including the environmental impact of the BP Amoco station site and the effect the new Anacostia Gateway Government Center will have on resident’s views of the Capitol building and the Virginia landscape. Office of Property Management (OPM) and other collaborators took time, both during and after the meeting, to address these questions.

Environmental issues related to BP Amoco site.

CBRE: Soil samples taken show no major ground contamination—only the type of confined, isolated contamination that would normally be expected under a gas station that has been in operation many years. Excavation of the ground to make way for the new building will totally remove any existing contaminated soil, and will essentially render the location much “cleaner” from an environmental standpoint.

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Traffic impact.

CBRE: Many residents of Anacostia have voiced displeasure with the “one-way” status of Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue (from the bridge to W Street). It is the intention of the D.C. Department of Transportation (DDOT) to return Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue and 13th Street to a two-way status. This will reduce the amount of morning and evening rush hour traffic that is now using the one-way Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue and 13th Street as “short cuts” to destinations south and east. In addition, DDOT, in conjunction with the Office of Planning, is designing major streetscape and landscape improvements to Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, Good Hope Road, and 13th Street in the vicinity of the project to make the entire area more inviting, pedestrian-friendly, and “neighborly.”

Government Center height.

CBRE: The building is not nearly tall enough nor is it positioned such that it blocks the magnificent view of the Capitol from the Frederick Douglass house, which is high on a hill about a mile away from the government center.

Job creation.

OPM: The District government’s partners for the project are striving to provide job and contracting opportunities to all residents and business firms of the city, but most importantly, to those located within Anacostia. The project will have a significant requirement that local, small, disadvantaged business enterprises (LSDBEs) be awarded construction contracts, and that local workers be hired on the project through the “First Source” program of the D.C. Department of Employment Services (DOES). □

Anacostia Gateway Government Center Project

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Neighborhood Commission (ANC) and local leaders such as D.C. Council member Marion Barry (Ward 8) have thrown support behind the development. Barry expressed support for the project in a March 18 meeting with the Office of Property Management (OPM), the D.C. Department of Transportation (DDOT), and CB Richard Ellis (CBRE). The ANC voted unanimously in favor of the Anacostia Gateway Development Project on May 3, with the Zoning Commission giving approval for the endeavor on June 23.

Open Dialogue with Community

Stakeholders in the Anacostia Gateway Government Center Project are encouraging an open dialogue with neighborhood residents as the District of Columbia government moves forward with its plan to revitalize the Southeastern quadrant of the city.

During the first in a series of community meetings, representatives with the District of Columbia government, real estate services firm CBRE, the architectural firm Heery International Inc. (Heery), and other interested parties came together at the Gatepost Center in Southeast Washington, D.C. to discuss the progress of the Anacostia Government Center Project.

“This project is a catalyst [for change] far larger than the intersection of Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue and Good Hope Road,” said Carol Mitten, director of the District of Columbia’s OPM, during the Nov. 17 meeting. Mitten, whose agency is leading the development of the project with DDOT and the Office of Planning, added that she is looking forward to introducing the project to the community.

The Anacostia Gateway Government Center will be located along a stretch of land bound by Good Hope Road, Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, and 13th Street, S.E. The government center—estimated to cost \$75 million—is just one component of the revitalization of the Anacostia Gateway corridor, which includes easing traffic congestion in the historic downtown neighborhood, a proposed light rail demonstration line, and a host of community revitalization and beautification initiatives.

Keys to Success

Anacostia is expected to benefit significantly from revitalization. In this case, the construction of a government center complex will bring governmental services closer to the citizens who need them most. It will also offer much-needed jobs and business opportunities to the historic neighborhood.

“The goals include [helping] existing businesses and residents grow and thrive,” said Aubrey Thagard, Ward 8 Neighborhood Planning Coordinator for the District’s Office of Planning. He noted that other goals include restoring the Anacostia community and environment, strengthening and retaining local assets, building off-transit resources, and executing a plan for new growth.

“The objective is to reconfirm and refine the neighborhood’s vision and encourage redevelopment of vacant and abandoned parcels,” said Thagard. Improving the exterior appearance and the market’s perception and coordinating both public and private investments are also key objectives of the Anacostia Transit-Area Strategic Investment and Development Plan.

“We are truly creating a visual gateway. The project provides a strong image crossing the 11th Street bridge from [downtown],” said Stephen Alicandro, director of Architecture for the east region for Heery, during the meeting. He agreed the government center site would be a catalyst for new growth in the area. In addition, when the issue of traffic congestion was raised, he stated that the project team, along with DDOT was committed to satisfactorily addressing the current traffic congestion concerns.

“We’re trying to minimize the traffic impact, so the [government center’s main] entrance will be located on Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue,” said Alicandro.

Community Questions Answered

During the meeting, community residents questioned the environmental impact of the BP Amoco site and the height of the government centers. Some residents are concerned that views of downtown Washington and the monuments might be affected.

CBRE representatives noted that the environmental concerns are not expected to be significant. According to CBRE, the BP Amoco station at the corner of Good Hope Road and 13th Street will be removed to make way for the smaller of the two government center wings.

Views of the U.S. Capitol Building, the Washington Monument, and other important landmarks have been maintained from such important vantage points as the historic Frederick Douglass home. Members of the community asked that further visual studies be taken from other vantage points within the historic district, which according to CBRE, would be undertaken at a later date. □